Interview with John L. Loughran

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR JOHN L. LOUGHRAN

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Q: Ambassador Loughran, it's very nice to have you here this morning. I wonder if you could start out by telling us a little bit about how you got into the Foreign Service, how you got interested in foreign affairs, and why and how you took this as a career.

LOUGHRAN: My interest started during my military career in World War II, in the Southwest Pacific, when, for the first time in my life, I came across indigenous people in the Solomon Islands, and spent as much free out in the bush; I was intrigued with the fact that it was under the control of the Australians. I met a lot of the Australian coast watchers who were working with us at the time. I found the interplay between two differing cultures fascinating.

Q: That's very interesting, indeed. I wonder if you'd back up for just a minute and tell us a little about your education before that and perhaps the circumstances under which you grew up, so that we get a picture of a Foreign Service officer.

LOUGHRAN: Very good. I was the third of 11 children, of a father who, following his law studies at the University of Pennsylvania immediately joined his father and two older brothers in the building business, and was successful until the economic crash of 1929. My father hadn't seen a law book for 13 years, and some good old Jesuit priest gave him a job

at the University of Scranton. He was intelligent enough to take the train to Scranton, Pa. so that he could study and stay six weeks ahead of the smartest student in the class, and relearn the law. He would spend his weekends selling real estate and trying to see us as much as he could, which was limited, given the fact that we were so many.

In Philadelphia, I received a normal education through the Roman Catholic private school systems, culminating with the Jesuits at St. Joseph's Preparatory School in Philadelphia. French was my main language, Spanish a subsidiary, and, of course, four years of Latin and Greek, which was a wonderful foundation for my future mastery of German and French when I was in the Service.

I went to Lehigh University in Bethlehem, where I studied business administration and economics. In 1939, we recall what happened in Poland, and I was desirous of getting my pilot's license. Fortunately, the Civilian Pilot Training Program was under way before we were in the war, so that there would be a backlog of trained people. I passed through that, against my father's objections, because he thought that I would have been much better for the Coast Guard, knowing the East Coast of the United States from Maine to Florida from sailing days. In a few words, I had a great desire to be a Marine pilot. I was not the best mathematician in the world, and at that time, all Marines were trained by the Navy. We were naval aviators, not Marine aviators. We trained at Pensacola or Corpus Christi.

Fortunately, I had a good friend and roommate, who never went past the eighth grade in grammar school; forged a document proving that he was a graduate of CCNY in New York; and was going to prove to all college graduates that a college education didn't mean much. He would be in the bathroom late at night studying. Suddenly his grades approached perfect scores, whereas I was just an average 3.5 student (which wasn't all that bad). However, I decided that if this high school boy could get a 4.0, I certainly could. He kept me on my toes, and I passed through Pensacola and later went to the Southwest Pacific.

Q: We've gotten you through that. You were in the Marine Corps until '46. So you must have seen quite a lot of action in that part of the world.

LOUGHRAN: We did.

Q: Were you in the Pacific the whole war?

LOUGHRAN: No. The time spent in the Southwest Pacific during that period was based on combat missions. When I completed sixty, I was transferred to Quantico, Virginia. At this Marine Base a famous old Marine general believed every Marine should know how to carry a gun, in other words, a Marine was a foot soldier first and a pilot second. So USMC put us all through a specialized training program in Quantico, Virginia. Shortly thereafter, the war was over.

I had done very well in the ground school, and they offered me a scholarship to Harvard to study law. When my father heard that I turned it down, he was aghast: “You mean to tell me you would have gotten three years of Harvard for nothing, and only had to sign up for seven years of continued active service?” Well, “I guess with 11 children, you're always bound to have one black sheep, and you're mine.”

Q: But instead, you signed up with the State Department at that time?

LOUGHRAN: No, I was convinced at that time that having flown so much, a career in aviation would be excellent. So I entered the aviation business.

Following Black Tuesday, 1947 (the first post-World War II recession), our order books were blank; we dissolved our corporation. It was a good learning experience. I was then employed by the American Viscose Corporation. In 1947 I was still searching for goals. I wasn't too concerned about making the almighty dollar. In any case, I remained with the American Viscose Corporation until 1950. I had negotiated a large sale to a major food chain store on the East Coast, and thought that I deserved an immediate increase in

salary. The executive vice president thought otherwise; we agreed to disagree and I took a leave of absence, married, and my wife Kathy and I took our honeymoon in Europe. We were passengers on a French boat filled with numerous American and foreign diplomats. It was in the days when U.S. officials could sail on foreign vessels. It was a rather slow boat taking ten days to Le Havre. During the trip I met many interesting American diplomats, started reading widely in the ship's library and then having numerous discussions with these people. It became clear to me that a diplomatic career was not to be dismissed easily. While in Paris, I improved my French by going to the Alliance Francaise under the G.I. Bill of Right. I was advised by officials at the embassy in Paris that were I intent on a foreign service career, I should return to Washington and take the exam. Well, that didn't appeal; I wanted to start where the action was and as you will recall, in 1950 we were in the early days of NATO and the Marshall Plan.

Q: And the Marshall Plan.

LOUGHRAN: The Foreign Service was expanding rapidly, and there were openings abroad. I decided to stay. The late Ambassador Achilles, a good friend, told me, “John, let me tell you honestly, that the best thing in this career is to come in the front door and not the back one. You'll be rewarded in years ahead if you're known as an FSO by written and oral exam, rather than a lateral entrant.” I didn't listen, took my chances, and entered as an FSS top secret control officer.

During that period, I was assigned to the first U.S. Delegation to NATO in London headed by Charles M. Spofford, a distinguished New York lawyer, with a very small staff. His first assignment to me was to find him a house. He had been unable to find one in bombed-out London suitable for representation. He had a country place, but he wanted a representational house within walking distance of the embassy. I saw over a hundred homes, and finally found one, but his wife didn't like it because the front door opened on a bombed-out square of flats. I asked the ambassador to inspect it. Fortunately, I had the lease in hand, which he signed. My relationship thereafter was most cordial; sadly, it was

not exactly the same with Mrs. Spofford. Shortly thereafter there was a vacancy in the European Coordinating Committee, which dealt with the U.S. country teams in the nations which were members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We met in Heidelberg, London, and Paris. My career in the Foreign Service commenced.

Q: Now you are formally in the Foreign Service. Where were you headquartered at that time?

LOUGHRAN: In London. The FSO examination took place in Paris.

Q: Was the Coordinating Committee headquarters in London?

LOUGHRAN: At that time, the committee was in London, but Spofford and Eisenhower wanted the consolidation of all of NATO's civilian and military headquarters in the Paris region. Under Spofford our delegation worked towards that. Spofford was also the chairman of the Deputies to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Council. He was a remarkable leader who did outstanding work in organizing NATO and establishing military and civilian headquarters in Paris in 1952. Kathy and I moved to Paris with the U.S. Delegation in the summer of 1952. Ambassador Spofford returned to his law firm and was succeeded by General William Draper who then appointed me as the liaison officer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization following the demise of the U.S. European Coordinating Committee.

The position was interesting. It included working directly with NATO authorities on cost sharing formulas for military and civilian headquarters, throughout the NATO area. You ma recall that the United States shared 35% of the headquarter's costs. The U.S. Congress was hoping for a lower figure. We managed to negotiate a 25% share for the headquarters building in the Bois de Boulogne, including a provision that should France ever leave NATO, for whatever reason, that it would purchase the civilian headquarters building at a

price determined by independent appraisers. Years later when France pulled out, they did purchase the building at a satisfactory price.

The daily delegation activities were many and varied. I attended council and ministerial meetings and became acquainted with many of our senior officials, among others, Ambassadors Merchant, Martin, Perkins and others from agencies working with NATO Affairs. Serving, helping and working with them was an experience that I treasure. They were principled, dedicated professionals from whom I learned much about the diplomatic career.

Q: You came in on the Wriston program about '55, as an FSO-5, which is not very high, considering the jobs you'd been doing and all the experience you had. But like some of the rest of us, you moved up pretty well as time went on. What did you go to from NATO headquarters?

LOUGHRAN: In 1956 I was transferred to the intelligence bureau of State (INR), where I worked with Ambassador Cummings. He had been a Deputy Assistant Secretary of the International Staff of NATO. I remained in INR for two years working with CIA on levying requirements on embassies in the field. These were the years, when the requirements were most specific. Staffs in Washington and abroad were thoroughly professional, and demands were met in a timely fashion. It was a rewarding experience for me to assist the cooperative relationships between the State Department and other intelligence agencies.

At that time, Hugh Cummings wanted me to become his personal assistant, but at the last minute acceded to a request from the National Security Council for an FSO to fill a position on the Operations Coordinating Board.

Q: Did you replace Art Richards on that job?

LOUGHRAN: No, it was the first assignment for an FSO to the NSC/OCB staff's Intelligence Section. State was somewhat reluctant to send me but it worked out to be

a choice assignment. I worked directly with the NSC reviewing the intelligence from the field along with General Goodpaster and deciding what material should be seen by the President.

Q: I was there. I was around Washington in those days, so I have a little feeling of paper volume and the operation. It was certainly, although very bureaucratic, I always thought that they really coordinated foreign policy better under the OCB, more thoroughly, than at any time since. I'm not so familiar with the coordination before that. There were a lot of headaches about it, and we complained about the amount of paperwork involved, but nonetheless, there was a coordinating process that was rather meticulously observed.

LOUGHRAN: Yes, indeed. And also, they had some outstanding men: Gray, who headed the National Security Council, and Karl Haar, who directed the OCB, were two eminently qualified men.

Q: Haar worked for Defense, as I remember. Or did he come later?

LOUGHRAN: He was head of OCB.

Q: When I was in there, which was a little earlier, he was the Defense rep on OCB.

LOUGHRAN: That's correct. It was a learning experience. It was during this time when officers of my grade—and I think I was by then an FSO-4 or about to be a 4—had the opportunity to go to one of the War Colleges, not the senior one. We did not have our State senior seminar. But I thought I had sufficient training from my exposure at NATO, that I didn't really want to go to a War College. The opportunity presented itself for a sabbatical, more or less, to a university, where you could study in any field you wanted for an academic year. I was encouraged to do this by the head of the economics department at Harvard, and was accepted by Harvard with ten other officers, all about my grade.

I studied the economics of developing countries, only to be called by Washington at mid-term and told to stop studying economics because I had been assigned to our embassy in Germany as the control officer on access to Berlin.

I must say I was slightly disappointed, because the children already spoke fluent French, and there were some outstanding schools in Francophone West Africa. I was going to go to Guinea; at least that was the provisional assignment. But nonetheless, I accepted the change. Off we went to Bonn, Germany, under Ambassador Dowling, where I served for four years. While serving in the economic section, I was appointed by Dowling to sit in on all his political staff's meetings on problems with Berlin. There were many, as you well recall. It was a period when there was the Russian threat of interdicting all access to Berlin, and it during that period, of course, that the Berlin wall went up. So it was an interesting period, particularly to work with a man of the stature of Ambassador Dowling. Later, he was replaced by Ambassador George McGhee, who, as you know, devoted—

Q: Quite a different type.

LOUGHRAN: Quite a different gentleman, and who devoted years and years of his life to public service, and I believe in a distinguished way.

Q: I also worked for Red Dowling, and I was very close to him for a while.

That sounds like a very good job for you. Are there any special instances that you remember in that Berlin period?

LOUGHRAN: Yes, unlike the late Ambassador Robert Murphy, who, in Washington, was counseling the serious consideration of militarily interdicting the erection of the wall, I was opposed to such action.

I was called back to appear before a special committee in Washington dealing with the problem, and I believe it was William “Bill” Tyler, who was Assistant Secretary of State for

European Affairs, who wanted to listen to someone who had some intimate knowledge of the problems. I recall my suggesting that we did not need to engage in any military action. I had not known Ambassador Murphy well, but it was my conviction that military action to interdict the erection of that wall was not in our national interest. For all practical purposes, the East Germans were in the Soviet orbit, and there was precious little that we could do about it at that time. I thought a far better way to go would be to continue with the tremendous success of NATO and the Marshall Plan.

Q: What year would this have been? About 1960?

LOUGHRAN: This would have been in the period 1960 to '64.

Q: If Murphy was there, it was still the Eisenhower Administration.

LOUGHRAN: No, it was already Kennedy.

Q: But Murphy was giving that advice. How long did this Bonn job last? That ran to '64 or more?

LOUGHRAN: It ran to '64. During that period, John Burns, later the Director General of the Foreign Service, had been posted to Bangui and had known us in Bonn, our interests in Africa, and asked me to come to Bangui as his DCM. The Department resisted and wanted me to stay for the full four-year tour in Bonn, which I did.

At the end of that tour Burns was transferred to be the political advisor to General Lemnitzer at NATO headquarters outside of Paris in Rocquencourt. When he arrived, he was given the opportunity to select his deputy, and he asked for me; the Department agreed.

Q: So your plans changed again.

LOUGHRAN: My plans changed again. No Africa, but back to Paris, which, I must say, was another choice posting. The French were thinking of pulling out of NATO, not totally, of course, but having the Western Allies remove all of their bases from French soil. Ambassador Burns was my number one for a year, and then was posted to Washington in '65, where he became the Director General of the Foreign Service. He was replaced by Bill Crawford, who had been our ambassador in Romania. So I had a year with John and a year with Bill at the NATO headquarters. I very closely with Ambassador Bohlen at the embassy and with General Lemnitzer at SHAPE headquarters. For a relatively young man, it was a rewarding assignment to be associated with many outstanding military officers. Working with Ambassador Bohlen was a rare opportunity. He was a man whom I admired greatly: calm, thoroughly professional, dedicated to our national interests and a very warm human being.

Q: The move from Paris to Brussels occurred several years after that?

LOUGHRAN: That's correct. I had left by that time. As it happened, I received a call from the personnel officer of the African: “Are you sure you still want to go to Africa?”

“I'm really sure I still want to go to Africa.”

“And you'll accept any assignment in Africa?”

“I'll accept any assignment in Africa.” This, without even discussing it with Kathy or the family. So I was offered the political counselorship at our embassy in Monrovia. It was exactly what I'd expected and remembered learning about when I was at Harvard, and it was a pleasant introduction to the African scene.

Q: There weren't all that many people just clamoring to go to Africa at that time—or since, anyway. (Laughs)

LOUGHRAN: There were some.

Q: There was a dedicated corps of them, I know. What was going on in Monrovia at that time? That was still a pretty stable place then, wasn't it?

LOUGHRAN: Under President Tubman it was stable. The embassy was rather large. We had many components, the Voice of America had a large station, other agencies of the government were fully staffed, some would say “overstaffed, overstuffed, and over there,” but nonetheless, the mission, as a whole, was unusually large.

The role of the ambassador was clearly the most important, because Tubman was, for all practical purposes, his own Secretary of foreign affairs, and dealt with the ambassador directly. Normal calls took place with political counselors of other embassies and all sections of the foreign office. Fortunately, there was sufficient travel money for officers to travel into the interior, to see what was really taking place with the indigenous Liberians as they interacted with the so-called Americo-Liberians.

I was only there nine months. The opportunity to see what AID was doing in the field in the way of assistance was enlightening. My relationships with the missionaries, some of whom had been there for 40 or 50 years, was most rewarding. They had mastered most of the indigenous languages; they knew the people; they were aware of the major problems facing the government which was the recipient of large amounts of aid which was ill spent.

Q: That's unusual, in my experience.

LOUGHRAN: It was a learning experience. I remember well the archbishop whose advice was one of the best I had ever received in my whole exposure to Africa before and since, “John, these people are as human as others on the face of the earth. They have their ways, and it behooves all of us from the so-called developed nations to try and listen to what they know, why they know it, and why they're doing what they're doing; then, if we can help them in any way by small incremental changes to change, they will accept such changes, but do not come in with massive assistance programs which they will be unable

to absorb." I thought, and I still think, it was one of the best pieces of advice I had ever received from somebody who had been there for years, never proselytizing. Forty years before I arrived, they gave up any idea of turning the indigenous Liberians Christians.They taught, and essentially tried to help them to help themselves by teaching them in their own languages, not having them learn all about Ireland. Most of them were Irish priests. They taught them about Liberia and where it was in relation to the continent of Africa, which I thought was a marvelous approach.

Q: You mentioned local languages. What was the official language? Was it English?

LOUGHRAN: The official language was English.

Q: What percentage of the people spoke English?

LOUGHRAN: I would say no more than 10%, if that.

Q: So you had to deal with a number of different tribal languages, which didn't make democracy, as we see it, a very easy process.

LOUGHRAN: Not at all.

Q: They are quite different than Somalians, as we will find out, I think, in a few moments. At least they had one language.

How long did the Monrovia assignment last?

LOUGHRAN: It was just short of nine months. Assistant Secretary Palmer had a vacancy in The Gambia. The job had been offered to a man in Australia. He was the only officer in a small consular post and he said: "No way am I going to a one-man embassy on the west coast of Africa." So when he turned it down, I was offered the job, and once again it was a great experience. United States policy had decided, under Assistant Secretary "Soapy" Williams, that when The Gambia gained its independence, it would be served by

an ambassador in Senegal, and we would not physically open a diplomatic presence. A consul would come down twice or three times a month to issue visas, but other than that, we would carry out our relationship with The Gambians from Dakar.

As you may know, “Soapy” arrived on the scene for the ceremonies of independence, and when asked by Dawda Jawara, the prime minister, what the United States was going to do about diplomatic relations, “Soapy,” whether he forget his cue cards or not, I don't know, turned to Jawara and said, “Of course, we're hoping to open an embassy.” (Laughs) I was able to say to “Soapy” Williams years later: “Thank God you did that.” Because it was, again, one of the most challenging four years to be the sole officer in our smallest embassy in the world. However it would have been impossible without the dedication and assistance of my wife.

You may recall, Ambassador, that we utilized the one-time cryptographic pad for classified telegrams.

Q: I didn't realize it was still going at that time.

LOUGHRAN: It was still going in The Gambia.

Q: I certainly knew it some years earlier.

LOUGHRAN: It was an unusual opportunity to get out in the field and supervise the AID programs, work very closely with the Peace Corps people, and try to carry out well structured AID programs in a nation which was certainly not ready for massive assistance.

Q: You did have, however, some technical people in residence there?

LOUGHRAN: No.

Q: They all came from Senegal?

LOUGHRAN: They all came from Senegal when required. The Gambians had at that time an outstanding technical mission from Taiwan. The Taiwanese, of course, were hoping for the African vote to secure the continuation of their presence at the United Nations. They sent extraordinary people in the agricultural field, who did just exactly what these missionaries had told me in Liberia. They listened endlessly before they decided on any programming activities. When they did, they were highly successful, particularly in the rice-growing areas of The Gambia. They raised production in some sectors of the country as much by 800%, which was unheard of in Africa.

We also had, you may recall, the self-help programs, where an Ambassador or charg# was allotted a certain amount of money, and the ambassador and his officers, working with the Peace Corps, could start their own minimal projects. Kathy started a cooperative textile project, which is still working and netting the cooperatives well over 250,000 pounds a year, which is a minor success story. She was a catalyst, worked with the government and then stepped out, with a minimum investment of Ambassador Dean Brown's self-help funds. I'm not saying that every self-help program in Africa today is still visible and working, but it can be done.

Q: How much of a Peace Corps did you have?

LOUGHRAN: We had 18 PCVs.

Q: What were they primarily doing—agriculture work?

LOUGHRAN: All were in agriculture. Some in machinery maintenance, but 90% in agriculture. It was an outstanding, wonderful group of young men.

Q: And you felt, generally, it was a successful concept and successful program?

LOUGHRAN: Yes, indeed, I did.

Q: My only experience with it was in Somalia, and I thought it was very successful, in spite of all sorts of problems we had with it. A lot of people, of course, have felt that it was of more benefit to the volunteers than to the country, but I didn't think that was true myself.

You were in Bathurst then for quite a while.

LOUGHRAN: That was an unusual assignment. It was almost four years. I guess the Department was satisfied. I certainly was satisfied. I enjoyed the intimate relationship with the government in a difficult time, I must say. The Senegalese always thought of The Gambia as a pin prick in the center of their country. Gambians and Senegalese were all Wolof-speaking or Mandinka-speaking; they were brothers, sisters, and cousins of the Senegalese.

Q: Colonial history.

LOUGHRAN: But The Gambians, as you may recall, earned, in addition to their money from peanuts and rice, a tremendous amount of money from what was called unrecorded re-exports—or smuggling. (Laughs) So they were very happy, because they were certainly, as individuals, earning more income per household than their brothers, cousins, and sisters in Senegal. But there were no really untoward developments at the time. I think Senghor came down one time and maybe some students pelted him with bananas or oranges, but other than that, there was no real animosity between The Gambians and the Senegalese.

Q: What did you do about school for your children there?

LOUGHRAN: There were no places in the only high school. The headmaster and the government's education department expressed the hope that I would not bring my children out, because there were such limited places in the school and far too many Gambian

applicants. I was certainly taken with The Gambians' desire and recognition of the value of education.

As an aside, yesterday I attended a working group in support of the textile museum here in Washington, and met the son of a former minister. I can still remember him as a 12-year-old when I was there. Five years ago, he received his Ph.D. in history and political science from the University of Virginia; he is now teaching at Howard University. My hat was off to all Gambian students because when I was there, the outside office was filled with 15, 20, or 30 who had studied every available scholarship possibility for foreign students in America; all they needed was their visa. Well, their big problem, as you can appreciate, was getting that ticket which proved that you had enough funds to get to the United States and back, so that you wouldn't become a ward of the United States. Many of them came, and many returned to their country participating in their own development.

Q: When you finished that assignment, you just moved next door, is that what happened?

LOUGHRAN: Yes. Dean Brown was already under consideration for posting to Jordan. The nominee to replace him had not received his letters of acceptance from the Senegalese Government, so the African Bureau wanted somebody there with experience in the area. I visited Senegal frequently to see ambassador, Brown, and knew the situation fairly well. So the Department transferred me to Dakar as a charge. Subsequently, Ambassador Clark assumed charge.

It was only to be a year, and then, of course, Ed Clark was given the opportunity as ambassador to Buenos Aires.

Q: Ambassador Loughran, you were just explaining that the new charg# in Bathurst had died, and you were asked to stay a little longer than you expected in Senegal. Do you want to pick up from there and tell us about the job in Senegal?

LOUGHRAN: I must say, I was wedded to the word “service” in our organization, and it's meant exactly that to me, and I loved every aspect of the Foreign Service career. So when Ed Clark asked me—as I thought, in a moment of weakness—when he heard the devastating news of losing his charg# in Bathurst, now Banjul, would I stay on for another year, I just jumped at the chance and said, “Of course, I'll stay on for another year. Delighted.”

Q: What was the name of Bathurst?

LOUGHRAN: Banjul. They divested themselves of Lord Bathurst's name and it's now a good old Wolof town, Banjul. It will always be Bathurst to me.

Q: You stayed for a year. What were our principal relation problems with Senegal at that time? What kinds of things did you work on?

LOUGHRAN: The drought of the Seventies had already devastated the peanut crop and the rice crops in Senegal. The major problems were economic. Politically, under Senghor, the situation was stable. He was not an autocrat. He always told us, as a former member of the assembly in Paris and an agreg# in languages, that he would retire, he would step down, and he would not find a bullet between his two ears. As you will recall, years later he followed through on that, retired and turned over the reins to the Dauphin, Abdou Diouf, who is now the President.

I think it was a remarkable period when AID was assessing the problems of this terrible drought in the Sahelian countries. There was a massive influx of personnel from all sorts of voluntary agencies, which, naturally, impinged on the operations of the embassy and the AID program, but I think Ambassador Clark was an outstanding leader and had some excellent officers in all of the programs.

Our position with the government was amicable, and certainly the programs were readily accepted. Again, as in so many of the African countries that you know of, infrastructure

problems predominated—the roads, the trucking, the petrol stops, and just moving the tons of sorghum and wheat and rice and corn from the ports to the interior, and hopefully to do this in such a way that there would be a minimum of corruption at every phase. I say this without judging the Senegalese. I think it's just natural. You suddenly have had a starving family with cousins and extended family, and there's an extra bag on the back of a truck that wasn't offloaded or maybe purposefully not offloaded, and it's going to go into hands and go into the market economy. But I think that's the nature of the beast.

It was a period of becoming acquainted with an incredibly able head of state with a very good Cabinet, and also it gave me another opportunity, as DCM, to work closely with all of the AID donors from the EEC and from our own country and all the relief agencies.

Q: How were your relations with the French Embassy and French authorities there? Sometimes this has been a problem in former French colonies. Did the embassy and you personally have good working relations with them?

LOUGHRAN: Quite frankly, there's no question, when the former Francophone states accepted the CFA as the unit of currency, they were still very closely associated with the French Government in any undertakings. I think we were always suspect, in the sense that Jean Foccart, the famous eminence grise of General de Gaulle, looked upon us as a nation trying to move into the area. I don't know what for. I don't think we were selling any great numbers of Deere tractors or locomotives from General Electric for the train system, or boats for fishing. But I think it was always in the back of the French minds that we saw an opportunity for economic expansion of our own exports. We had no intention of replacing the French; we were intent on competing. In the housing field, we did. We had an extraordinary housing program in Dakar, right close to the Youf airport. It was unfortunate that they didn't build in accordance with Senegalese standards.

But there were many successes in that field, and there continue to be to this day. I think it depended a lot on my two chiefs of missions. I can say with total objectivity that the

relationships that Dean Brown and Ed Clark had with their counterparts and everybody in their missions was outstanding. Whether it's remained that way with others, I don't know.

Q: By that time, did most of the Senegalese ministries fully staffed with French advisors?

LOUGHRAN: Many, but much less than in the Ivory Coast. Senghor recognized the problem. He was aware of what Houphouet-Boigny had done in the Ivory Coast, lengthened the time that the French would remain. I think to this day, if I'm correct in my reading of the African scene, there are more expatriate Frenchmen in the “C#te d'Ivoire” than there were when I was there in the Seventies. On the other hand, there are fewer in Senegal. Whether this has worked to the benefit of the Ivory Coast and not to the Senegalese, I just don't know. I think the economy in the Ivory Coast is so much more diversified, with many, many more mineral resources, and many, many more types of oil, palm oil, in addition to other varieties and certainly tremendous resources of forest products, woods, for export to world markets which the Senegalese just do not have. Water resources, yes. Fishing resources, certainly; and of course, the peanut—or as the British named it the ground nut. But they have experimented with the cattle industry, feed lots, but it's, again, a long and very difficult problem to change the indigenous farmer to accept an American method of raising cattle.

Q: Let's move along so we don't leave poor Somalia totally out of the picture. At the end of the Senegal period, you did have a period in Washington. Do you want to go over that generally as to what your duties were, things that you think are worth recording?

LOUGHRAN: It was my first experience working with large numbers of people. The Nigerian Directorship as I told you earlier, was closed down by Assistant Secretary David Newsom once the Biafran war was over, and placed in the West Africa Directorship; this was certainly acceptable to me , particularly as I became deputy to a gentleman who had come in from the United States Information Agency, Rudolph Aggrey, who came from a distinguished family in Ghana. Working with Dave Newsom and Tony Ross and people of

that caliber was a privilege. And for the first time, I could say that I was really within the working bowels of the State Department, with all the problems of producing papers going to the Secretary of State and which had to pass muster with the executive secretary and, of course, the relationship with the other agencies who were involved with Africa.

More than that, I think my greatest pleasure was to do things which I had been trained to do by Livingston Merchant, Ted Achilles, Chuck Spofford, James Dunn, and Ed Martin: “If you're going to have a desk officer, by God, John, delegate and let him make a mistake once in a while, because he has to learn by his mistakes, and you're not going to bring down the government because of minor errors. But give that fellow a little bit of rein so he can think for himself.”

To work with the number of desk officers which we had in West Africa, the largest directorship in the Department, (there are 18 nations from Mauritania to Nigeria and from Mali to Chad) was a formidable challenge. I insured that the desk officers travel to the field since there was sufficient travel money enabling them to know their country and know their missions and what they were doing, the goals and how they were accomplishing them.

Early in 1975, I was offered the post of Somalia as chief of mission. I can still remember Ambassador Mulcahy's facial expression when he showed me Dr. Kissinger's nominating document (as far as the State Department was concerned, I was the choice). There were not any political appointees under consideration for Mogadishu. I smiled and Mulcahy, a fellow Irishman, said, “Why in the good Lord's name would you want to go to that forsaken place?”

I replied, “Ed, I think there's something to be learned about a whole new area. That's why I would like to go there.”

And he said, “My God, I knew you were Irish, but I never thought you were stupid.” (Laughs)

Q: This was 1975 that you were assigned there. How did your wife take this? Was she eager?

LOUGHRAN: Kathy was certainly a good soldier. I must go back a little bit, because an old acquaintance and a good friend, Martin Hillenbrand, had suggested that he would be interested in having me as his consul general in Munich. Having had four years in Germany, we certainly knew and had many, many friends in that area.

Q: Munich is a great job.

LOUGHRAN: An ambassadorship was not necessarily her goal in East Africa, and to have finished a career as consul general in Munich was most appealing to Kathy. But nonetheless, she went along with a pleasant smile on her face, and I think after the four years there, wound up loving the post as much as I did.

Q: Mogadishu was a greatly different place when you got there than when I was there. I went there when we were still kings of the mountain. You went there after we'd been way down in the trough and, I guess, were starting to come up again. Do you want to describe the atmosphere as you found it and the problems in our relations and so on with Mogadishu? What was the status of relationships with the Soviets, for example, when you went there?

LOUGHRAN: We were certainly odd man out, of all the Western embassies assigned there. I've never been in Moscow. All I could think of was it had to have been the worst post in East Africa and probably worse than those that served in Moscow during the time of Stalin. All of the embassies were under 24 hour surveillance by Somalis who were trained by experts: the KGB and East German intelligence services, and Czechs, Romanians, and others who were experts in developing listening devices placed in embassies. To have the residence continually bugged— every room—and attempts to

have the embassy itself bugged, went on 24 hours a day. We were not allowed to travel more than 25 kilometers from the center of Mogadishu.

I guess the word that describes this more than anything else was “frustration.” Certainly I was privileged to have the confidence and respect of Mohammed Siad Barre and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Omar Arteh, a teacher from the north and a distinguished gentleman, whom I could see at any time, night or day, much to the consternation of the Soviets, who didn't want me to have two minutes with Mohammed Siad Barre. But since we both know the Somalis, there's nobody that's ever going to tell a Somali how he's going to run his business. Siad ran it his way. But it was a frustration for our mission, and when you have a few people who are assigned to an African post, who didn't want to be assigned there in the first place, but go because they're good people the morale factor becomes a major consideration.

There was absolutely no access at the economic, commercial, or consular level to Somalis. As a matter of fact, there was round-the-clock surveillance of the front door of the embassy. Any Somali entering the embassy was picked up when he came out and taken for interrogation. There were very few that ever came to our Embassy.

Fortunately, we had a tremendous asset in our USIS reading room. Intelligence officials did not interdict Somalis from entering USIS and we maintained a large library with a good selection of journals, magazines, basic books on political theory, economic theory, and the culture of America, as well as many books on Africa. The reading room was filled to capacity 10, 12, 14 hours a day.

Q: Were you able to give any sort of talks or anything of that sort in the library? Was that possible at all?

LOUGHRAN: Nothing. Before the Russians were thrown out, my wife Kathy, an artist and portrait painter had done a lot of sketching in Somalia at our beach house which was a godsend to us, because we did have a little bit of freedom.

Q: It was to us, but it must have been much more so to you, because you didn't have much else.

LOUGHRAN: We certainly used it extensively. Kathy would paint Somali ladies who were selling baskets even though they were interdicted from dealing with Americans. They would pose outside of the beach house and she would paint them. Kathy completed 40 or 50 portraits during that period and exhibited them in the information section of the USIS offices across the street from the embassy. The exhibit was well received by the Somalis, well attended by numerous ministers, and given appropriate recognition by the Voice of Mogadishu.

You probably remember when Mohammed Siad Barre, who didn't make any great friends with the Arab League, permitted a Lufthansa plane, which had been hijacked in Spain, to land at Mogadishu. The history is well known. The Germans had a crack anti-terrorist unit which knew the access points on all major aircraft flying international routes. They were able land directly behind the Lufthansa 707 without the hijackers' knowledge. They ignited a long fuse in front of the nose of the hijacked airplane which ran to the end of the runway; all the hijackers aboard the 707 attracted to the cockpit to see what this was all about. Instantaneously, the Germans blew the hinges, entered, and disposed of the hijackers. The only loss was a member of the crew who had been murdered in Bahrain or Jeddah.

United States Embassy officers were given access to the airport with our walkie-talkies. The entire operation was coordinated with the German charg# whose communications with Bonn had been interdicted; he used our facilities. It was a highly successful activity I can't take credit for this whatsoever, except that I went to the minister of communications, who said, “If you have the equipment, be our guest. You are allowed freedom of

movement anyplace on this airport." The Germans, of course, were thrilled with this. It was one of the great success stories of my mission, but well trained specialists did the work.

Q: Did that have any negative repercussions? Did they have to compensate by being tougher on you afterwards?

LOUGHRAN: No.

It was shortly after that, at the end of the Ogaden war, that the Russians departed from Somalia. Prior to their exodus and at a meeting in Aden Siad Barre told an assembly of chiefs of state of nations in the area who were aligned with the USSR that he would never consider interdicting international shipping operation out of and through the Red Sea," I think this really made the Russians realize that a continued productive relationship with Somalia was impossible, whereas consolidating their influence in Ethiopia was the preferred policy.

There are people to this day who doubt that this was the reason that Siad withdrew his troops from the Ogaden war with Ethiopia. I think he already knew of the tremendous Russian airlift of a billion dollars' worth of arms to Ethiopia. Siad, as soon as he heard this, had given the order to pull back his troops, which had already taken Harar, Jigjiga, and could have gone all the way to Addis, but Mohammed said Barre was not a stupid man. He knew that once those arms had arrived, his forces would have been massacred and much as his colonels and generals opposed his decision when the pull-out order was given, they withdrew to Somalia. The rest is history.

We are now a formidable pressure in Somalia and the Russians are in Ethiopia in force along with the Cubans. I think that Mengistu is aware that it's not very comfortable to have the arms of the bear of Moscow around you. I do not believe that he is tormenting genocide which some people say is taking place. If you read the popular press (the Atlantic has a recent story about genocide), I can not conceive of an Ethiopian doing what everybody purports he is doing. I could be wrong. Relief agencies and the intelligence

agencies seem to say that this is exactly what's happening. They are going to regain the territory controlled by the EPLF in Eritrea, because access to the sea is vital. The railroad through Djibouti is certainly operating, but 90% of the Djiboutians are Somalis. So it remains the same problem that it was in your days, Mr. Ambassador.

Q: And probably will remain long after we're both gone.

LOUGHRAN: I think so.

Q: And the next generation, too.

LOUGHRAN: There's some serious talk that Mohamed Siad Barre has met with Mengistu and that are putting out peace feelers. Whether, in fact, this is accurate or not, I don't know. I hesitate to go into the Department anymore. I'm out of it, but I'm still interested.

Q: The switchover occurred before you left Somalia.

LOUGHRAN: Yes, it did.

Q: Did that change your working relations considerably, or was it a very slow process?

LOUGHRAN: It was a very slow process. Certainly all officers commenced to have access to their counterparts in the government. Our AID friends in Washington moved swiftly. We were able to divert a ship in the Indian Ocean en route to Bangladesh, and provide some immediate assistance as an in earnest of our intentions. Somali hopes were, of course, total replacement by American equipment similar to what the Russians had provided. That was not—and continues not to be to this day—our intention, and, I think, correctly so. It's the last thing in the world that the Somalis need. They need rational assistance in the economic field so that they can continue to develop by their own ways.

As you know, probably more than I do, since you were able to travel so much and I never was, Somalis are an incredible people: gifted linguists; remarkable human beings; terribly

hard to know, but once you do know them and you're accepted, I think there's a mutual respect and a mutual give and take. As poets, they have few peers in the world at large. As you know, they never adopted an orthography until 1972, and when I think of the thousands who mastered the Koran verbatim, it borders on being unbelievable.

Q: And recited their ancestors for 2,000 years, that sort of thing.

LOUGHRAN: Exactly.

Q: Incredible. Has the literacy rate in Somalia increased considerably or only a little?

LOUGHRAN: UNESCO reportedly examined this and found that when Somalis closed down the schools for two years and sent everybody to the field with chalk and blackboards and radio receivers, that they did, in a period of five years, go from a 12-16% literacy rate to an 86% literacy rate. The Somalis that I know, having been back four times since retirement, and having the privilege of traveling anywhere in the country, would say it certainly is well over 50%. Exactly how high it is, I have no way of judging. But I think it is one of the most remarkable achievements of any country in Africa.

Q: A great thing. How did you come to leave Somalia and get back to the Department again?

LOUGHRAN: Through normal transfer procedures. I was assigned to the African Bureau's Public Affairs Office and spoke to many students at colleges, high schools, and others throughout the United States. At the end of 1979 and with 37 years of government service, I elected to retire.

Looking back, I can assure you that the United States Diplomatic Service is a unique service. I hope in the future, as so many people have stated in Op Ed pieces in various newspapers that we will have the best Foreign Service in the world. Sometimes I think we are our own worst enemies. I think it's going to change. I hope it will, because I think it's

vitally necessary in the years ahead to have a Service with that word underlined. It means what we all know it means—service to our country, to our President, and to our fellow citizens.

Q: I am glad you are optimistic. If you've got another minute or two, I'd like to touch on something that I think is often very interesting, because it occurs to me that many, many retired Foreign Service officers may retire from the public payroll, but they don't lose their interest in foreign affairs. I know you are preeminent among those, because you've done lots and lots of writing and lecturing, one thing and another. I'd appreciate it if you'd take just five minutes to outline what you've done since retirement in a broad way, so we'll have a record of this kind of thing.

LOUGHRAN: I have to go back to my last farewell call on Somalia's head of state. He did a most unusual thing in requesting me to bring along my wife, Kathy. She had been given the nickname, by the way, of Arrowella, the only Queen Somalia ever had. As you know, a nickname in Somalia has both a positive and a negative sense, so it is balanced. This unfortunate queen was a chauvinist female that castrated males, but was one of the most adept and eminently qualified leaders the nation ever had. There was real progress under her reign.

Kathy's name was Arrowella, and the president always referred to her by that name. She accompanied me and President Mohammed Sid Barre was pleased. But he requested me to consider, first of all, becoming his lawyer in Washington. I said: “I'm not a lawyer.” Then he asked me if I would consider being his honorary consul general to all 50 states with adequate budgets but no great salary. I replied implied that it was impossible, that it might be in time, but I would take that under advisement. Finally, he turned to my wife Kathy and said, “Look, both of you have acquired a knowledge of our people that very few chiefs of missions have during their time here. I know what you've studied. I know that our security service broke into your residence when you were absent and removed your cards on all your research.

I asked him, “Would you please give me back my cards?” (Laughs) I never did receive them.

He said, “Think of something and make a proposal. We're still considered by the American people as the bad boys of Africa, and I'd like to have that corrected and a more objective view obtained by the American body politic.”

Following my year of public speaking around the country, we gave the request some thought. We came up with the idea that Somali poetry is the glue that binds the country together, and they do have a culture. While they may not have any great artifacts or works of art similar to other nations in Africa, they have the implements that they make by hand, their magnificent jewelry, their nomadic homes, and other artifacts. But principally, it's poetry, sound, and music.

Consequently, in speaking to many experts here and in Europe we conceived of the idea of creating our own foundation; found a lawyer who were familiar with non-profit foundations; and we decided that this is what we would do. We did create our own foundation: the Foundation for Cross Cultural Understanding, and we decided that our first project would be Somalia. We made a proposal, which was accepted by the government, and I was invited along with my daughter to defend it. We made our proposal before a group of five ministers and the head of their National Academy of Arts and Sciences. It was accepted.

Even today, it is difficult to believe that the Somali Government approved a project requiring an initially sum of $250,000. We received that amount which was matched by the National Endowment for the Humanities. We collaborated with the African Studies Program at Indiana University, one of the top three in the nation. Indiana University has a wonderful linguistic program and a professor who is bilingual in the Somali language. We prepared on an exhibition which has traveled to eight sites throughout the country, and may have one final showing in the Washington area.

Q: Do you know when?

LOUGHRAN: The exact date has not been fixed, probably in 1980, which will terminate the project. In the meantime, the Foundation is working again with Indiana University, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, UCLA, and several other universities in developing an exhibition of dress as a personification of the individual, and how the Africans' dress has meanings that the normal Western member of society does not appreciate. It's been a long time in process but is finally coming to fruition. The authorities at Rockefeller are interested in the project, as is the National Endowment for the Humanities.

So we continue to do this as our main activity while, at the same time, I accept any and all lecture requests, whether at the Foreign Service Institute, colleges, high schools, and grammar schools. I've not received many calls to the Western part of the United States in recent years, but many women's organizations on the Eastern seaboard, and I'm always happy to accept these.

Q: I must say that's the most highly organized post-retirement life that I have ever heard of, and a wonderful thing. It makes what most of the rest of us do very, very insignificant, indeed. It's not always that way.

LOUGHRAN: I'm well and happy, and my eldest daughter, after 15 years of work with the National Science Foundation, and probably working a little bit with us in the Foundation, decided at age 37 to go back to university and obtain a doctorate in art history and cultural anthropology. I think she has a big charge on her plate.

Q: That is a big field, combining those two.

LOUGHRAN: It certainly makes me happy that she, has discovered a goal in her life and is pursuing it. So far she's an A+ student.

The second daughter is married to a civil engineer who is remarkably qualified in his field, spent a lot of time in South America and in East Africa and West Africa, and now they are in Indonesia.

And the other member of the family is an architect with the Sheraton Hotel Corporation, who travels around 50 states acquiring potential hotels for Sheraton and frequently travels to Europe doing the same thing.

Q: I thank you very much, indeed. This was a totally fascinating interview.

End of interview